Otaro Maijo 舞城王太郎

TSUKUMOJUKUMATSU 九十九十九松

19th September 2003 (Friday)

My name is Tsukumojuku Kato. I'm a great detective.

If we think of the release date of the book titled *Tsukumojuku* as of the day I was born, it means I'm barely half a year old, though I'm established to be around sixteen.

Can't help that even my own age is vague like that. Just like every other great detective in this world, I don't exist in the sense that other people do—people who pay taxes, use the convenience store bathroom, and drink too much until they lose memory. The perfect being that is the great detective can only ever exist inside stories.

Being aware of that is exactly what sets me and other great detectives apart.

They call it being a meta-detective.

I'm aware that I'm a character in a story, and I'm observing you, the one setting me in motion, the one that may be called Beyond. That's what I mean by being a meta-detective.

I don't really understand why I was brought here... or at least I don't know it right in this moment. There must be a case to solve. There's no other reason for a great detective to exist.

You are writing a book. The title is *Love Love Love You I Love You!*. You started writing it as a short story about a month ago, right after you'd send *Drill Hole in My Brain* to editing, but it has long passed a hundred pages and would probably count as a novella at this point.

I glance into your notebook, and it looks like today's some deadline you set for yourself. It seems you are planning to finish writing in one go. You have already made lunch and dinner in preparation, the oden just needs to have some daikon radish added for flavor once it cools down.

You promptly start clicking away at the keyboard, not glancing away even once. And I'm very sorry to say that, but I'm not really interested in what you are writing. As a detective I'd care a little if it at least was mystery, but judging by the title, it very much is not.

Oh well.

You don't seem to be doing anything else, just sitting there at your desk writing the book, so there's nothing to be gained by just staring at you.

There must be a reason why I'm here, a reason why it must be me, and it's my job to figure out those whys—so I think that I'll do just that while you're working in front of me.

The first thing that catches my attention is that today's 19th September, so 09.19. If this date shows up here, then it's probably supposed to mimic the number pattern 9-10-9-10-9 that makes up my name, right? Just like how *Jorge Joestar* was released on 19th September?

Then I think: Huh? How on earth do I know the release date of a novel from 2012?

But as a meta great detective I'm able to solve this mystery the very next second. Ah, right, right.

This story may be set in 2003, but it's being written in 2016. The title is *Tsukumojukumatsu*. ..."matsu"?

I don't understand what that "matsu" part means, but it's probably only because I don't have enough data to work with yet.

If I put together all the data required, I will without a doubt solve the mystery at hand. That's another trait I have as a great detective.

Let's see, this story is apparently being written for a special Otsuichi-centric issue of the magazine *Da Vinci*. It's a spinoff for Otsuichi's work—something called *Shousei monogatari* that started out as Internet essays kept in the convention of diary entries—and it's being created for the occasion of that work being released as a physical book.

Ah, I get it. So just like in these essays, here we also have a date in front, like in a diary. At the same time that this revelation passes through my mind, it bring some worry along.

If this really is a diary entry, it means you are going to describe what happened on this day from thirteen years ago.

But back then, when you were still writing *Love Love,* you and Otsuichi... or, as you call him, Hirotaka Adachi, had never even met each other, not to mention had any meaningful interaction.

Basically, was this really your everyday journal, there would be no reason for Adachi to be even brought up.

In fact, you seem to be spending this day focused only on the novel in front of you, solely devoted to tapping on the keyboard. If it really was all that happened on that day, then it wouldn't be something worthy of focusing a story around, nothing more than yet another unremarkable day written down in your diary... and as I'm thinking this while staring at the back of your head, I suddenly realize my mistake.

The narrator of this story, that first person "I", is me, Tsukumojuku Kato. This isn't your diary. It's mine.

And since I, the meta-detective, may exist in every possible spacetime between my birth in March 2003 and the present of March 2016, then anything and everything may happen now.

I'm in the conference room N201 at Kodansha on 27th November 2004. Nobody's there at 9 PM, though they've only recently finished cleaning up after today's big event called Live At Faust @ Kodansha. There are still a few decorations left around.

There is also a body.

But that's... what's the meaning of this?

That's *my* body.

With a start, I realize what I just thought.

"*My*"... "*I*"?

Ah, it's not the pronoun *boku* that I use for myself, but the epistolary *shousei* used by men when they want to show self-abasement. Another word for "I", basically.

But even if we look exactly the same, that dead person can't be me. I know for a fact I'm still going to exist in 2016, so there's no way I have already died in 2004.

I mean, I know how there are different mes with the same name that you had appear in other works, but I'm not going to get myself even more confused here.

Instead I focus on how the first person pronoun switching to this "*I*", *shousei*, serves to imitate *Shousei monogatari*, and that you have decided to kill me once again.

I look at *my* body.

The corners of *my* mouth have been cut wide open. Judging by the amount of gore on the ground, blood loss caused by those wounds was what brought on *my* death.

But why would *I* just be lying there sprawled on the ground, bleeding out, not even trying to get help?

And grinning to boot?

...no, no, obviously it's not that *I* have been smiling in the face of death. The deep cuts just make the expression seem like a smile.

Anyhow, I don't really get what's going on.

I stand up and still facing *my* body put my hands together in prayer.

It flits through my mind that, well, I should probably go and contact the police now, or wait, let's get Kodansha's security guard first, but then I move in spacetime again.

The new place isn't that far away distance-wise—the tea lounge of Hotel Chizanso Tokyo built right next to Kodansha's headquarters—but time has jumped to 11 PM on 14th June 2005.

It's after hours, so all the lights have been turned off, and in the middle of this dark vast lounge, surrounded by tasteful furnishing, *I* am lying murdered.

And dressed in feminine clothing and a wig with two pigtails.

What on earth is the meaning of this?

Was the only reason for that getup just to add insult to injury while killing *me*?

It can't possibly be the case. Everything must have meaning, and I just can't understand it yet because of insufficient data.

Why would that Kodansha meeting room and this place come in sequence, one after another?

Observing my surroundings, looking into the moonlight streaming through the great windows of the room, I remember something.

I've been observing you all this time, so I know it well.

On this very day, in this very place, you and Adachi met face to face for the first time.

Right.

With that in mind, I realize why *I* had to be killed in that meeting room earlier.

Live At Faust was an event tied to the release of *Faust* vol. 4. In preparation for that volume, Adachi had taken part in a project called *Bungei Gasshuku* and wrote a story under the name Otsuichi, and you were later the one asked to make illustrations for it.

No doubt the culprit of this Serial *Me* Murder Case is choosing to repeatedly kill *me* in places where you and Adachi came in contact. While I'm still thinking upon this, spacetime moves once again.

It's 11 PM on 21st August 2010. I'm standing in an alley by the cinema Shinjuku Wald 9.

Looking around I spot a yellow poster advertising the movie *NECK*.

Huh? So it's the premiere of a movie based on your original concept.

Adachi had nothing to do with this movie, though... but wait, the movie was actually associated with a project in which you both had taken part: the book series *Hell Detective Pluto O*. Adachi wrote its first entry, *V for Violin*, and you wrote the eighth one, *Double D for Dead Doll*, both of you using the same pen name of Mataro Echizen.

I strain my eyes in the darkness. Deep in this remote alley, where even drunkards don't wander into, *I* am lying dead.

A tiny flag of Japan sticks up dismally from where it's been stabbed into *my* head.

One look at the spilt blood and brains makes it clear that the wound was fatal.

Fuck, I think.

The cut mouth, the feminine clothes, the flag, what in the hell?

Why am I being mocked this horribly?!

Calm down, I say to myself, but before my frantic heartbeat can slow down, I already move in spacetime.

The next time is 19th September 2012, 10 PM. The release date of *Jorge Joestar* that I got reminded of earlier in your room. Behind the Shueisha building *I* am lying dead.

Yes, of course it'd be this of all days. Way before you released your Jojo novel, Adachi had already written *The Book*, which we may call an "entry number zero" of sorts for the VS JOJO series... As my train of thought keeps running in this vein, I feel dejection and exhaustion set in at the sight of *my* murdered body.

I am lying on the ground half-naked, dressed only in big vertically striped pants.

What a ridiculous, yet miserable sight...

I see no obvious injury, so I lean over and pull down *my* baggy pants to find multiple stab wounds near the navel.

Then I realize that it's not that *I* have no underwear on, those pants themselves are a pair of giant boxers, even though I took them to be just somewhat short normal pants at first. But why would this *dekapan*...?

I tilt my head in confusion as my mind gets stuck on that word.

Dekapan?

Huh? What the?

Is that *dekapan* word even a part of my vocabulary? Doesn't seem to be a common noun, is it? No, no, it's not that I don't know that one can say *dekapan* to refer to oversized underwear, I've just never really used this kind of words before.

Am I feeling startled solely because I've just used a word for the first time?

Before I can figure out the answer to this, spacetime jumps once again—and then the answer comes.

It's late night on 28th March 2015. At 11:45 PM, the premiere showing of the movie compilation *Bokutachi wa jozu ni yukkuri dekinai* that you and Adachi had been working on together has already ended. On the roof of the cinema Euro Space in Shibuya *I* am lying dead, *my* right arm outstretched above *my* head, left hand brought to *my* chest, right leg bent so its ankle rests on the left knee.

I know this pose.

It's from *Invasion of Astro-Monster*, a movie that had been released in 1965 before you were even born. It was originally a pose Godzilla made, but that scene left less of an impression than a certain later parody of it.

Namely, the "sheeeeeh!" pose.

Now that I have arrived at this conclusion, I can explain the strange ways in which *we* were murdered.

All of them were meant to symbolize characters from the manga *Osomatsu-kun*.

The *I* from 2004 had *my* mouth split wide to resemble Dayon.

The *I* from 2005 in feminine clothes was Totoko.

The *I* from 2010 was Hatabo.

The *I* from 2012 was Dekapan.

And the *I* from 2015 was Iyami, zansu...!

I return to 19th September 2003 at 7 PM.

You are still writing *Love Love Love You I Love You!*.

As I stand behind your back, I get lost in thought.

The case is still not done.

This sort of symbolic *mitate* killing is never done just for its own sake. It's only ever arranged in order to conceal something else... This was even written about in *Tsukumojuku*. But what could possibly be hiding underneath this *Osomatsu-kun mitate*?

"*I*" was killed five times.

Identical looking boys were killed.

They were killed to fulfill symbolism related to *Osomatsu-kun*.

The main protagonists of *Osomatsu-kun* and *Osomatsu-san* are sextuplets, six identical brothers.

If so, then wouldn't one more "*me*" have to be killed?

That's the concealed message, is it...?

A message meant for this here *me*?

Ah...!

Everything has meaning.

Indeed it does. The world is that much wonderful and beautiful.

As the smell of oden is filling the room, *I* am waiting for death.

Who is the culprit that will kill *me*?

You, of course.

Not the you who is still writing *Love Love* in front of *me*. The you who is writing this.

Why will you kill *me*?

Because we would not want the character of Adachi himself murdered instead, would we now. Hahaha.

...

That was a joke. O Tsukumojuku Kato, it is because killing you six times is necessary to convey what is the very reason for the existence of this world. It is because you are the one that is a great and meta-detective, that is omnipresent like God, that possesses the worldview informed by spacetime travel, that is capable of understanding the intention of **ME** who is Beyond—and that is therefore able to look his own death in the eye.

Yes, you are right. While you are speaking as yourself, you are also speaking through the words immanent within *me*. *I* certainly am the sort of character you speak of.

That's why *I* am waiting.

As the sixth of the sextuplets, and as Chibita, *I* am waiting to be covered in oden and murdered.

Oh. *I* am "waiting". *Matsu* means "to wait".

One could also say this moment is *matsu,* so "the very end", haha.

As you say, the world is beautiful. Everything has meaning. Everything and anything conveys meaning. *I* have meaning as well.

I spend the rest of 19th September entranced, but in the last moments, just as the you at the desk is wrapping up the final sentences of *Love Love*, *I* glance at the notebook to your side.

Faust Festival, an event in Shinjuku celebrating the release of *Faust* vol. 1, is scheduled for tomorrow. Not sure why Adachi would even show up at that event, and the entry in *Shousei monogatari* that concerns 20th September 2003 doesn't make a mention of him being there either. Then again, Adachi is known for using many different pen names like Otsuichi, Eiichi Nakata and Asako Yamashiro, so huh, maybe he stealthily wrote something for *Faust* vol. 1 as well?—And it's precisely because *I* arrive at this idea that *I* am going to be murdered so *my* mouth stays shut.

So that's the motive.

So that's why today.

A day before your first contact with Adachi you kill *me* so *I* won't say too much, but also as a form of a gun salute in his honor.

Because on all those occasions—the *Bungei Gasshuku* event, making *Pluto O*, *JOJO*, *Bokutachi wa jozu ni yukkuri dekinai*... that is, the individual works made specifically for *Bokutachi's* theater showing—and not only on those few days, but even in terms of literary debut, of moviemaking in general, in everything, the one that has paved the way in front of you, who already created before you, was always Adachi.

Otsuichi.

Otsuichi—guess *I* really am *oh, so much your fan.*

Translation: sparklyjojos.tumblr.com / @KarsowaMina

(Very Belated) Happy Tsukumojuku Day! 09/19/19 -- 九/十九/十九